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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 002169

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/PD AND EAP/BCLTV

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SUBJECT: VOICE OF AMERICA RECEIVES POSITIVE SIGNAL FROM
VIETNAMESE TELEVISION

11. (U) SUMMARY: VOICE OF AMERICA'S (VOA) ASIA DIRECTOR FOR MARKETING AND PROGRAM PLACEMENT, DR. JOYCE NGOH, GARNERED A POSITIVE REACTION FROM VIETNAM TELEVISION ON HER FOURTH ANNUAL VISIT TO HANOI. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE VOA BEGAN ITS MARKETING EFFORTS IN VIETNAM, VTV OFFICIALS WELCOMED VOA'S ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAMS AND AGREED TO WORK TOWARDS A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING. DR. NGOH'S FIRST VISIT TO HANOI RADIO AND TELEVISION ALSO ESTABLISHED THE GROUNDWORK FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) ON AUGUST 3, DR. JOYCE NGOH, ASIA DIRECTOR FOR MARKETING AND PROGRAM PLACEMENT OF VOICE OF AMERICA (VOA) IN BANGKOK, MET WITH MR. PHAM VIET TIEN, GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM DEPARTMENT, AND MR. NGUYEN VAN PHUONG, GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DEPARTMENT AT VIETNAM TELEVISION (VTV). (COMMENT: STATE-OWNED VTV IS THE LARGEST TELEVISION STATION IN VIETNAM AND BROADCASTS NATIONWIDE. IT RECENTLY BECAME THE FIRST STATION IN VIETNAM TO SIGN A COPYRIGHT AGREEMENT WITH THE MUSIC INDUSTRY TO PAY FEES FOR SONGS USED IN ITS BROADCAST PROGRAMS. END COMMENT). THIS IS DR. NGOH'S FOURTH VISIT TO VTV TO EXPLAIN THE VARIOUS TYPES OF ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAMMING VOA MAKES AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE. IN THE PAST, VTV OFFICIALS EXPRESSED LITTLE INTEREST AND SEEMED TO REGARD DR. NGOH'S VISITS AS NO MORE THAN A COURTESY CALL. CITING BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS, MR. PHAM SAID THEY ARE NOW VERY INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH VOA.

13. (U) DR. NGOH DESCRIBED TWO POSSIBLE PROGRAMS FOR VTV USE AND PROVIDED VHS TAPE SAMPLES OF BOTH. "SPECIAL ENGLISH" IS A PROGRAM OF FIVE-MINUTE REPORTS ON AGRICULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND HEALTH ISSUES. IT IS AN ORIGINAL VOA PROGRAMMING AND TAILORED FOR THE VIETNAMESE MARKET. THE SECOND PROGRAM, "CONNECT WITH ENGLISH," CONTAINS FIFTEEN-MINUTE SHOWS OF A TEACHER AND STUDENT INTERACTING THROUGH REPETITION OF WORDS. VOA HAS PURCHASED THIS PROGRAM FROM A PRIVATE COMPANY. MR. PHAM EXPRESSED VTV INTEREST IN BOTH PROGRAMS, BUT SAID HE PREFERRED THE LATTER, ESPECIALLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH VTV'S EXISTING ENGLISH PROGRAMS.

14. (U) DR. NGOH EMPHASIZED THAT VOA WOULD PROVIDE THE PROGRAMMING FREE OF CHARGE BUT, IN RETURN, VTV SHOULD APPROPRIATELY BROADCAST CREDIT TO VOA. MR. PHAM PROPOSED HAVING AN ANNOUNCER THANK VOA AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH PROGRAM AND INCLUDE WRITTEN CREDITS AT THE END. WHEN PRESSED ABOUT HAVING A VOA LOGO APPEAR ON THE SCREEN THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM, MR. PHAM SAID THAT WAS UNACCEPTABLE BECAUSE VIEWERS WOULD THINK VTV HAD "STOLEN" THE PROGRAM FROM A FOREIGN CHANNEL. HE FURTHER COMMENTED THAT, IN THE PAST, VTV HAD REJECTED PROGRAMMING FROM CNN FOR THIS REASON. DR. NGOH ALSO DISCUSSED PROVIDING THE PROGRAMMING VIA SATELLITE TRANSMISSION INSTEAD OF VHS TAPES, AS VTV PREFERRED. FOR THE FIRST TIME, VTV OFFICIALS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN WORKING TOWARDS A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH VOA IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. THEY ALSO DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF VOA PURCHASING THE BROADCASTING RIGHTS FROM A PRIVATE COMPANY AND PROVIDING THE PROGRAMS TO VTV FREE OF CHARGE UNDER VOA SPONSORSHIP.

15. (U) ASIDE FROM VTV, DR. NGOH MET FOR THE FIRST TIME WITH VU NGOC MINH, VICE DIRECTOR OF HANOI RADIO AND TELEVISION (HRT), A LOCAL TV AND RADIO STATION BROADCASTING TO TEN CITIES AND PROVINCES IN THE RED RIVER DELTA AREA. MR. VU NOTED HRT'S INTEREST IN LONG FEATURES OF AMERICAN TOURISM, CULTURAL, MUSIC, AND HEALTH PROGRAMS. MR. VU INSISTED THAT ANY FEATURES PROGRAMMING WOULD HAVE TO BE SUBMITTED IN ENGLISH, THEN PROPERLY EDITED AND DUBBED BY THE STATION. HE REJECTED DR. NGOH'S SUGGESTION OF POSSIBLY PROVIDING A VIETNAMESE-LANGUAGE PROGRAM BECAUSE IT WOULD NOT PROPERLY REFLECT THE "NORTHERN VIETNAMESE STYLE AND DIALECT." MR. VU AGREED TO MEET WITH DR. NGOH IN THE FUTURE TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS OF POSSIBLE PROJECTS.

16. (U) DR. NGOH ALSO MET WITH VOICE OF VIETNAM (VOV) RADIO STATION'S VICE DIRECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMS, NGUYEN VAN KHIEM. VOV HAS BEEN BROADCASTING VOA'S "NEW DYNAMIC ENGLISH" PROGRAM SINCE FEBRUARY, BUT HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY OFF-AIR DURING THE COLLEGE EXAMINATION PERIOD. WHEN ASKED WHY VOV WAS NOT MENTIONING VOA SPONSORSHIP EACH TIME DURING ITS FIFTY-EPISODE PROGRAM, AS ORIGINALLY AGREED TO, MR. NGUYEN REPLIED THAT VOV'S STANDARD POLICY WAS TO CREDIT ITS

SPONSORS IN THE FIRST AND LAST EPISODES ONLY. DR. NGOH RESPONDED THAT THIS WAS AN ISSUE THEY SHOULD CONTINUE TO DISCUSS BEFORE VOA ALLOCATED FURTHER PROGRAMMING. DR. NGOH ALSO PLANS TO TRAVEL TO HO CHI MINH CITY THIS WEEK FOR SIMILAR MEETINGS.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: AFTER FOUR YEARS OF PRESENTING AND RE-PRESENTING VOA'S PROGRAMS, THIS IS THE FIRST SIGN OF A POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM VTV. ALTHOUGH WE ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE REASONS FOR THE SUDDEN CHANGE OF HEART AND MIND OF THE CONCRETE STEPS VTV MUST STILL TAKE TO ATTAIN AN OFFICIAL MOU, THE UNEXPECTEDLY ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE FROM VTV IS A NOTED DEPARTURE FROM THE PAST. VOA EFFORTS IN EXPOSING ITS PROGRAMMING AND INCREASING ITS APPEAL TO THE VIETNAMESE AUDIENCE THROUGH ENGLISH TEACHING IS A WORK IN PROGRESS THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR CLOSELY.

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